

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 189035

STADIS////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SOPN, IT

SUBJECT: VOA BROADCASTING TO ITALY

REF: ROME 11218

1. THE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN CONSULTING INFORMALLY WITH USIA ON THE POSSIBILITY OF RESUMING MEDIUM-WAVE ITALIAN-LANGUAGE VOA BROADCASTS TO ITALY. ACCORDING TO USIA, THERE ARE NUMEROUS OBSTACLES TO SUCH AN UNDERTAKING, AMONG WHICH THE FOLLOWING ARE PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT: (A) THE LONG LEAD TIME NEEDED BEFORE SUCH BROADCASTS COULD BE RESUMED, I.E., ONE YEAR TO ASSEMBLE THE NECESSARY BROADCASTING TEAM, SUPPORT AND RESOURCES, AND (B) THE TWO TRANSMITTERS PRESENTLY AVAILABLE PROVIDE ONLY A POOR MEDIUM-WAVE SIGNAL TO ITALY AND THEREFORE SOME ALTERNATIVE MEANS WOULD BE REQUIRED INVOLVING SUBSTANTIAL EXTRAORDINARY USIA APPROPRIATIONS AND FURTHER DELAYS. MOREOVER, THESE EXTRAORDINARY

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OUTLAYS WOULD PERHAPS RESULT IN A HALF-HOUR DAILY BROADCAST

BEAMED TO A LISTENING AUDIENCE IN ITALY OF AN INDETERMINATE AND MOST LIKELY UNMEASURABLE SIZE.

2. ON THE BASIS OF THE FOREGOING CONSIDERATIONS, THE DEPARTMENT IS PERSUADED THAT WHILE THE PROMPT RESUMPTION OF VOA BROADCASTING WOULD NOT BE IMPOSSIBLE, IT WOULD BE

EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AND EXPENSIVE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE DEPARTMENT IS MINDFUL OF THE STRONG COMMUNIST (PCI) GAINS IN ITALY AND OF PCI INFLUENCE IN THE ITALIAN PRESS AND ON THE BROADCASTING POLICIES OF THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT-RUN RADIO AND TELEVISION NETWORK (RAI). IN THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEW, US ATTITUDES AND STATEMENTS CLEARLY HELPED SHAPE THE ITALIAN ELECTORAL DEBATE AND THERE IS A CLEAR NEED FOR REGULAR, AUTHORITATIVE, AND COMPLETE PRESENTATIONS OF US VIEWS, STATEMENTS, AND POSITIONS ON RADIO (AND IDEALLY TV) BROADCASTS REACHING THE BULK OF ITALIANS.

3. DEPARTMENT HAS NOTED WITH GREAT INTEREST THE RECENT RULING BY THE ITALIAN CONSTITUTIONAL COURT REPORTED BY USIS ROME (REFTEL) WHICH HAS LEGALIZED THE OPERATION OF PRIVATE TV AND RADIO STATIONS IN ITALY. ON THE BASIS OF THIS RULING, IT WOULD ALSO APPEAR THAT US AFN STATIONS IN ITALY, E.G., CAMP DARBY AND VICENZA, COULD SIMILARLY BE REGULARIZED.

4. ACTION REQUIRED: EMBASSY VIEWS ARE REQUESTED ON WHETHER IT MIGHT BE MORE PRACTICAL, FASTER, LESS EXPENSIVE AND JUST AS EFFECTIVE TO TRY TO PLACE MATERIALS WITH THE PRIVATE FM STATIONS (I.E., RADIO LUGANO) AND TV STATIONS RATHER THAN ATTEMPTING TO RESUME VOA BROADCASTING.

5. EMBASSY JUDGMENT IS ALSO REQUESTED AS TO THE EFFECT OF THE SUPREME COURT'S RULING ON THE STATUS OF THE AFN STATIONS. KISSINGER

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